

**SENATE—Monday, February 28, 2000**

The Senate met at 12:04 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

**PRAYER**

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, source of righteousness and the One who is always on the side of what is right, we confess that there are times when we assume we know what is right without seeking Your guidance.

Lord, give us the humility to be more concerned about being on Your side than recruiting You to be on our side. Clear our minds so we can think Your thoughts. Help us to wait on You, to listen patiently for Your voice, to seek Your will through concentrated study and reflection. May discussion move us to deeper truth and debate become the blending of various aspects of Your revelation communicated through others. Free us from the assumption that we have an exclusive on the dispatches of Heaven and that those who disagree with us must be against You.

Above all else, we commit this day to seek what is best for our Nation. Give us the greatness of being on Your side and the delight of being there together. In Your righteous name. Amen.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Honorable PAT ROBERTS, a Senator from the State of Kansas, led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME**

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

**MORNING BUSINESS**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 2 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each. Under the previous order, the time until 1 p.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, or his designee.

The distinguished Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. I am going to use some time that has been set aside for Senator DURBIN.

**PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY**

Mr. REID. Mr. President, older Americans pay the highest prescription drug costs in the entire world. Because of the high cost and the lack of coverage, many of our seniors are being forced to make tough choices. In fact, one in eight seniors is forced to choose between buying food and buying medicine. Many seniors simply do not take drugs their doctors prescribe because they cannot afford them. Some seniors do not fill one or more of their prescriptions. Others divide their pills in half. Others, instead of taking half a pill a day, skip days and take them every other day. Some older Americans do not buy their own prescription medicine so they can buy the prescription medicine their spouse needs.

In a country that is blessed with the economy that we have, and some of the best medical researchers in the world, it is disgraceful that lifesaving drugs are not being made accessible to our seniors. Prescription drugs are a necessary component of modern medicine, and our seniors are dependent on them to maintain healthy lives.

It used to be, before Medicare came into being, that 4 out of every 10 seniors who were hospitalized had no health insurance. At the time we started Medicare, it was not necessary that we have a prescription drug benefit. Thirty-five years later, it is absolutely important.

I have in hand a couple of communications I have received from people from Nevada. Let me share with you what Michael Rose said:

I am aware that Medicare reform will be the congressional agenda this year and I would like to share my thoughts with you.

Skipping one paragraph and getting to the meat of this communication:

I cannot afford the 5 medications that I currently take if I have to get care elsewhere. Although I will be on the Medicare rolls as of January 2000, I will still not be able to afford my meds. As a manic-depressive, this means that I cannot afford sanity and I am scared beyond your wildest dreams about what will happen to me when the medications run out because I can't afford them.

Please vote in favor of including prescription drugs in any Medicare reform package that is considered by the Senate.

Mr. President, I repeat what he says: I will not be able to afford sanity. He takes pills to keep himself sane.

I have a communication from Gail Rattigan, who is a registered nurse. She lives in Henderson, NV.

Senator REID: I am a [registered nurse] who recently cared for an 82 year old woman

who tried to commit suicide because she couldn't afford the medications her doctor had told her were necessary to prevent a stroke. It would be much more cost effective for the government to pay for medications that prevent these serious illnesses than expensive hospitalizations. These include but are not limited to blood pressure medications, anti-stroke anticoagulants, and cholesterol medications. The government's current policy of paying for medications only in the hospital is backward. Get into health promotion and disease promotion and save money. Please share this message with your republican colleagues. Thanks for your support. Sincerely, Gail Rattigan.

She is right. We need to move on and do something about giving senior citizens who are on Medicare prescription drug benefits. We need to do that at the earliest possible time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

**PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS FOR CHINA**

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I would like to respond to comments made over the past week in the press and elsewhere questioning Vice President GORE's support of the superb agreement negotiated by Ambassador Barshefsky with China as part of the WTO accession process. I have spoken with the Vice President. I am totally confident that he fully supports the Administration's position. He believes that the bilateral agreement is an excellent one. He believes that it is vital that the Congress approve permanent normal trade relations status as early as possible this year.

The Vice President sent a letter outlining his position to Jerry Jasinowski, President of the National Association of Manufacturers, on February 18. I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FEBRUARY 18, 2000.

Mr. JERRY JASINOWSKI,  
President, National Association of Manufacturers,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR JERRY: As our country turns its attention to the issue of trade, and whether Congress should approve permanent, normalized trade relations with China, I want to share my views.

As I have said publicly and privately, I support the agreement reached by our Administration on the terms under which China will be permitted to accede to the